Last Man Standing: A Farmer's Tale

AFK bots are functionally extinct within LMS.

A common misunderstanding of LMS's bot problem was that they were always bots. But in fact this was not the case until very recently. The previous years of afk bots within LMS were essentially hand played accounts by gold farmers from Pakistan (and earlier being South America).

Outwardly quite friendly, these Pakistani gold farmers were mostly young men whom each played 12-16 accounts in computer labs in Lahore and Peshawar -- two of Pakistan's largest cities. This was a very good job. From those I spoke with they were able to sell gold at a rate that totalled slightly more than the national average wage of around $300 a month. But after several years of continuously farming LMS, those farmers who I talked with daily slowly became less. The farms they were running were slower to log-in after weekly updates, and my Pakistani friends began appearing on new mule accounts every few days. Something had changed...

There are several possibilities that could have occurred for them to disappear. The most likely of which is that Jagex took a more active roll in targeting their account creation pipeline. I have little evidence to show about how this pipeline functioned, but from what I was able to piece together these farmers were purchasing their accounts from a middleman. These accounts were in such quantity and identical specs that it would be impractical for them not to be botted which made them easy targets if Jagex decided they wanted to update their detection methods.

It appears Jagex did just that! On March 26, 2025, Jagex released a blogpost detailing their improvements to the player-report feedback system. This allowed players to receive feedback via email on accounts they had reported if Jagex deemed that action was prudent. What I found interesting about this blog post was that during the three months prior, Jagex's ban waves had began to be more effective on the LMS farms. This can be viewed by observing the graph price of Ornate Maul Handles over the past 12 months. OMH's were the primary item purchased by farm accounts and are the most obvious in showing the monthly targeted ban waves Jagex began achieving in early 2025. From personal observation I noticed a increasingly delayed response in the farmer's ability to restart their farm, dwindling to a weak 12-day recovery time in late May. It is my opinion that prior to the update to the player-report system, Jagex had already adjusted how their detection systems caught bots in a way we hadn't seen in quite a while. Running these hand-played farms effectively became too costly to operate for these individuals.

It was the last week of May when I realised my Pakistani friends weren't chatting in Urdu in the lobby anymore. What had been every day conversations were suddenly silent. Our daily chats made me realise that these young men weren't the mindless evil that I viewed had viewed these farms as. They spoke of hardship but also celebration (weddings were quite popular subjects) and confused my understanding of where I thought I stood on bots and gold farming (botting vs gold farming?).

But then the machines attacked...

There has always been small pulses of PVP bots since

the application of machine learning to OSRS around when the Ferox Enclave was released in 2020. The first developer to make an effective PVP bot saw opportunity in Jagex's decision to update LMS from the archaic minigame it was on its release to the minigame we have today. The rapid player fights that his program was exposed to quickly trained it into the foundation of the killer terminator bots we have today. Now his and other's programs are sold or rented to players in all aspects of the game.

The botters who periodically ran these programs in LMS have had varying success in their pvp ability. From tick perfect DD terminators to very poor prayer flickers, they were all beatable with enough skill or perfect play. But the departure of the afk gold farmers has drastically shifted the PVP bot exposure the average player faces when attempting to play this minigame. These new and complex bots are much harder to detect (observed ban rates) than the massive farms that Jagex is now actively suppressing. After one particularly annoying RNG death to one of the lesser PVP bots, it made me wonder if Jagex considers this a success? Is the goal of bot suppression to make the game better? Because despite the success in combating LMS exploitation in quantity, the overall quality of the average player's experience has decreased drastically. I find it hard to believe that it can be counted as a success.

Thank you for reading,

A minigame fan